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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN 2000

Results oriented evaluations of operational projects

Note by the Executive Secretary

The Commission may wish to consider taking the following decisions:

(a) to confirm the Commission's role in facilitating operational projects in transition countries, and request the secretariat to continue the results oriented evaluation of operational projects accordingly;

(b) to ask the Bureau of the Commission to review, at regular intervals between annual Commission sessions, the progress made by the secretariat in implementing operational projects and in developing a strategy for operational activites with a view to making an effective contribution to the reconstruction and development of ECE member countries in transition to a market economy;

(c) to encourage the secretariat to permit the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities to increase the transparency and visibility of ECE's results in operational activities through the development of a computerized database of operational projects, and through modern forms of its public dissemination;

(d) to encourage the secretariat to contact potential donor countries, using the communication channels of the Commission and its Bureau, with a request for financial contributions to the respective Trust Fund of ECE, and

(e) to request the secretariat to provide a detailed report on fund raising initiatives for operational projects and their results to the fifty-seventh session of the Commission.

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Introduction

1. At its fifty-fifth session, the Commission requested the secretariat "...to conduct results oriented evaluations of operational projects in order to help it prioritize its work, where feasible." (E/2000/37; E/ECE/1381, para. 28). The resources of the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities were strengthened in the course of the year in response to a Commission request (ibid, para. 27). The strengthening permitted this evaluation to begin with the projects covered in this report. The Commission may wish to take note of this report, and consider the conclusions that may be derived from it for the prioritization of ECE's operational projects, as well as for the future strategy in the design of its operational activities as a whole.

I. Selection of projects for the evaluation in 2001

2. The secretariat derived its priorities in the beginning process of project evaluation from the relevant paragraphs in the report of the fifty-fifth Commission session in May 2000 (E/2000/37; E/ECE/1381, paras. 26-27). Accordingly, this evaluation covers projects in the following fields:

(i) Advice in the implementation of international legal instruments and standards;
(ii) Projects pertaining to CIS and Balkan countries only; and
(iii) Projects pertaining also to larger groups of countries.

3. In addition to singling out fields for special attention, the Commission had also commented on a few relevant aspects for project implementation. They were: (a) that Regional Advisers should continue to play an important role in advising and helping the countries in transition apply ECE norms, standards and conventions; (b) that decisions on which operational activities are selected and given priority should take into account guidance from intergovernmental discussions and be based on actual ECE expertise; and (c) that such decisions should reflect on the recommendations of the external auditors. These three comments were taken into account in the specification of the evaluation format (see section II below).

Advice in the implementation of international legal instruments and standards

4. The Transport Division deals with the majority of ECE legal instruments. For countries having obtained or resumed independence in the beginning of the transition period, past and current work focuses more on support to access to those legal instruments which constitute accession priorities, rather than on implementation proper. For example, 16 of the 55 legal instruments in the area of transport were identified as being of outstanding importance for SPECA countries, and operational projects in view of accession to these instruments proceed through SPECA and in the five Central Asian countries, individually.

5. Nevertheless, support to implementation in a stricter sense occurs in a number of projects. In these cases, training efforts play a large role. The projects included in this evaluation are listed in Part A of the annex to this note, including their objectives and their results obtained so far.

Projects requested by CIS and Balkan countries only

6. The Commission requested the secretariat to continue giving priority to demands for assistance from Balkan and CIS countries. Such demands can be made in exclusive contexts reserved for Balkan and CIS countries (i.e. either individually by the countries concerned or in subregional groups reserved for them like SPECA or, to a lesser extent, SECI). On the other hand, demands from Balkan and CIS countries can also be dealt with in frameworks that are more generally available, either for all transition countries, or for subregions including countries located in other subregions. The projects falling under the first of these categories are listed in Part B of the annex to this paper.

Projects pertaining to larger groups of countries

7. The evaluated projects belonging to the second category mentioned in the preceding paragraph are the subject of Part C of the Annex. Accordingly, their objectives and results may be relevant also to other than Balkan and CIS countries.

II. Evaluation criteria and project evaluation

Criteria for evaluation

8. Monitoring and evaluation of projects include both measurable and judgmental criteria. The success of an evaluation system will depend on the acceptance of all the criteria by the actors in the implementation of the projects. Such acceptance usually requires time. In developing evaluation criteria, the main emphasis was given in this early phase of the evaluation process to measurable criteria. Other, more judgemental criteria were only used when respective indications were strong and where they pointed in the same direction. The Commission may consider whether or not to suggest the more pronounced use of judgmental criteria in future evaluations of projects.

9. In accordance with this approach, the following criteria were used:

(i) maintenance of country ownership over the project;
(ii) use of relevant intergovernmental discussion and ECE expertise;
(iii) coordination with UNDP and other institutions of the UN family;
(iv) delays in project management during different phases of implementation (project formulation, steps of implementation, demonstration of the result of project implementation);
(v) sufficiency of resources for project implementation;
(vi) relationship of the project to the solution of the underlying problem;
(vii) results of project implementation; and
(viii) use of guidance from external auditors

Results of evaluation

10. All evaluated operational projects received approval in due form – either from the country or countries concerned, or through the intergovernmental body mandated for that purpose. Where the initiative for a specific project originated in the ECE secretariat, the project was formulated in cooperation with the country or countries concerned before operational action started. In the majority of cases, the evaluated projects are very specific, so that cooperation over project implementation inside the ECE secretariat is not possible. Instead, the role of the ECE secretariat in project implementation is more that of a 'project facilitator' than that of a substantive partner. The substantive implementation of the projects therefore almost regularly requires partnerships with competent experts outside the ECE secretariat.

11. Such partnership is primarily found in national administrations. It usually goes hand in hand with support from established assistance programmes of the partner country – in other words, priorities, experiences and practices of individual assisting countries play a decisive role when mobilizing assistance. Support always involves the provision of expert support for substantive project implementation. In a minority of cases, sometimes substantial financial support is given. In other cases, substantive support is obtained from UN agencies or other international institutions. In these cases, support is more often in the form of funding assistance than in that of provision of expertise. Organizational cooperation with UNDP country offices is unsystematic. This may change in the future for two reasons. First, UNDP Resident Representatives now also play the role of UN Resident Coordinators for Operational Activities, so that their services as "country office" become more readily available to the UN system as a whole. Second, the General Assembly has recently been stressing the growing need for incorporating regional and subregional dimensions in UN operational activities and securing greater involvement of the regional commissions in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (A/RES/53/192, para. 41).

12. It is impossible to foresee and, therefore, anticipate most of the delays in the different phases of project implementation. The main reasons for delays seem to depend on the conditions in the recipient country of the project. However, delays also occur frequently in communication with potential partner countries. In all cases where they occur, delays in communication interrupt sustained project management and have negative effects on project implementation. Sometimes, the concrete formulation of a project appears to require difficult coordination between the national administrations involved. Also, severe language problems arise in substantive project implementation between partners from different countries. The acquisition of linguistic capacities in recipient countries continues to be a major requirement for project success. It also happens that earlier agreements about the use of the results of project implementation are not honoured by all partners.

13. One almost systematic delay seems to occur with regard to the efficient (i.e. widely visible) demonstration of the results of project implementation. The realization of interim results

in project implementation, where they exist, may be included in progress reports to intergovernmental discussions, but their actual impact is not evident. The presentation of final project results to a significant audience is limited to projects, which include the preparation of a published report – i.e. to a minority of operational projects. Even in these cases, evidence on which audience is reached with such reports, and their effects, is practically non-existent. It seems that the main reason for this unsatisfactory situation resides in shortage of resources in the ECE secretariat – there is no staff devoted to information tasks regarding results of operational projects, and the project managers do not find time or money for assuming this part of the work process. See section III below for conclusions from the evaluation regarding financial resources for operational projects.

14. In all evaluated projects, the project formulation is relevant for the solution of the underlying problem or problems. The list of projects in the Annex to this paper includes, for each project, its objectives. It can also be seen from the Annex that significant results were obtained in all projects listed – with one exception, where the project started so recently that results cannot yet be expected. The guidance obtained from the external auditors regarding the results oriented evaluation of operational projects is relevant to the question of funding of such projects. The subject is referred to in detail in section III below.

III. Conclusions with regard to future priorities and problems in implementation

General impressions

15. All evaluated projects – with the exception of the one project already referred to in the preceding paragraph – have given rise to significant interim or final results. If this impression is confirmed in future project evaluations, it probably indicates that the project managers have generally developed realistic approaches to their project work. Project formulation and implementation appear to be well adapted to ECE core resources, and resource deficiencies are being dealt with through the mobilization of support either from national administrations or enterprises, or from international institutions inside and outside the UN system.

16. Subject to confirmation in future evaluations of other operational projects, the most general conclusion therefore is that the ECE contribution to the reconstruction and development of the countries in transition with the help of its programme of operational projects can be demonstrated notably in projects in which ECE's contribution is that of a "project facilitator". At the same time, the success of the programme can be increased in several ways. The most important concerns the funding aspect of the activity, which is dealt with in the next sub-section. But there are more options for improvement. Perhaps the most outstanding is the increase of the visibility of ECE's contribution to the solution of transition problems with the help of practical or operational projects. This option can only materialize if specialized resources are dedicated to this function. Experience shows that project managers cannot fulfil it in present conditions.

17. An increased visibility of ECE contributions to transition processes would probably increase stakeholder confidence in the respective capabilities of the Commission. Other options exist for measures towards the same end. Among them is the forceful support of the Commission for ECE's operational activity programme, as it is taking shape through an inventory of all existing projects across the secretariat, and its integration into a consistent strategy. A step in this direction could be the discussion of the operational activity programme at regular intervals by the Commission's Bureau.

Problem Number One: The organization of adequate financial support

18. Two levels of financial support should be distinguished. The first concerns the funding of project management. This heading covers small consultancies (of up to US$ 2,000 each), consultant travel, project management travel, participation of experts of countries in consultations abroad, translation and interpretation, occasional hardware and software support and miscellaneous expenditures. The corresponding total requirements of project management funds per year at current activity levels can be roughly estimated as being between US$ 300,000 and 400,000. Funding for these activities should in principle be part of project management. It should therefore ideally pass through ECE accounts. Such funding is presently insufficient, and the external auditors deplored the absence of a funding strategy on the side of ECE. While a full strategy for such fund raising, as suggested by the external auditors, is not yet available at the time of writing, corresponding activities have started. However, much remains to be done. A first necessity relates to determining an intergovernmental partner to whom the secretariat can turn routinely when fund raising is necessary, and who would oversee the use of raised funds.

19. The second type of required funds concerns finances for actual implementation of projects. This category is obviously far more important in terms of required volume of funds. At present, substantial funds have been raised for the implementation of the following projects listed in the Annex:

- TRANS 2 (Part A): US$ 2 million, from TACIS
- ENV 1 (Part A): Approx. US$ 10.4 million, from TACIS (9.5) and countries (0.9)
- EN 1 (Part A): Approx. US$ 900,000 (from Energy Efficiency 2000, EU, Italy)
- IND 1 (Part A): Approx. US$ 500,000 (from multinational companies)
- EN/ENV 1 (Part B): US$ 1.75 million, (from UN Development Account for SPECA)
- OA 2 (Part B): US$ 250,000 (from CEI/EBRD)
- OA 5 (Part B): US$ 95 million (WB loans US$ 86 mln, USA grants US$ 9 mln)
- ECON 1 (Part C): US$ 650,000 (from UN Fund for Population Activities)
- STAT 2 (Part C): US$ 600,000 (from UNDP)
- OA 7 (Part C): Approx. US$ 380,000 (from CEI/EBRD)

20. This means that 43% of the projects listed in the Annex benefit from financial support obtained from donors outside the ECE. Depending on their source, these amounts can be in the

form of loans or grants. Some of the amounts pass through UN accounts, most do not. While the above projects are in many cases adequately funded with the amounts shown, several of them are not, and almost all other projects listed in the Annex require funds for implementation. Two major problems seem to occur in raising the funds required for project implementation. The first is the apparent trend in an increasing number of countries to concentrate their assistance on a small number of priority countries for them (often defined in terms of their market size). This makes it very difficult to find funds even for excellent projects from a substantive and organizational point of view, which are not located in priority areas. The second is the difficulty ECE has in convincing potential donors of the viability of projects, given the low visibility of the Commission in this field of work. However, once "project facilitation" by the ECE secretariat succeeds in project verification and in overcoming resistance, it seems that all partners are reasonably satisfied with the services obtained from the Commission's secretariat.

Proposed decisions by the Commission

21. In the light of the above – notably the conclusions obtained from the evaluation - the Commission may wish to consider taking the following decisions:

(a) to confirm the Commission's role in facilitating operational projects in transition countries, and requesting the secretariat to continue the results oriented evaluation of operational projects accordingly,

(b) to ask the Bureau of the Commission to review, at regular intervals between annual Commission sessions, the progress made by the secretariat in implementing operational projects and in developing a strategy for operational activites with a view to making an effective contribution to the reconstruction and development of ECE member countries in transition to a market economy,

(c) to encourage the secretariat to permit the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities to increase the transparency and visibility of ECE's results in operational activities through the development of a computerized database of operational projects, and through modern forms of its public dissemination,

(d) to encourage the secretariat to contact potential donor countries, using the communication channels of the Commission and its Bureau, with a request for financial contributions to the respective Trust Fund of ECE, and

(e) to request the secretariat to provide a detailed report on fund raising initiatives for operational projects and their results to the fifty-seventh session of the Commission.

ANNEX

LIST OF SELECTED PROJECTS

(E-mail addresses for further contacts are given in brackets after the project titles)

Part A: Projects relating to the implementation of international legal instruments and standards

TRANS 1 Implementation of agreements of 1958 and 1998 concerning construction requirements of road and off-road vehicles [jan.jerie@unece.org]

Objective: Initially, improvement of road traffic safety. Later, supplemented with environmental protection, energy conservation and theft protection. Removal of technical barriers to trade in vehicle parts.

Results: Preparation and updating of 112 Regulations by the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29). Record keeping of national adoption of individual Regulations by contracting parties (36 for 1958 Agreement, 10 for 1998 Agreement).

TRANS 2 Training of customs, transport and industrial experts in the transport of dangerous goods [zisis.haritos@unece.org]

Objective: Implementation of the ECE Convention on Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and other relevant international conventions. Smoother cross-border transport and safer internal transport of dangerous goods. Establishment of a training institute in Russian Federation.

Results: Implementation started in 1999 with TACIS funds. Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine selected for implementation. TACIS consulting group for Russian Federation selected. TACIS consulting group for the other three countries in process of selection.

ENV 1 Pilot project for the monitoring and assessment of eight transboundary rivers [rainer.enderlein@unece.org]

Objective: Preparation of the implementation of the UNECE Convention on Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. Determination of river pollution levels prior to pollution control and reduction. Preparation of the purchase and installation of monitoring equipment in the river basins investigated.

Results: Substantial advances were made in five of the eight river basins, where the pilot project is planned to be completed in 2001. Beginning of analogous work in the three remaining river basins in the course of 2001.

ENV 2 Study of the application of the provisions of the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context [wiecher.schrage@unece.org]

Objective: Preparation of the accession to or implementation of the convention in individual countries.

Results: With Finnish, Swedish and EU financial assistance and assistance in kind, the study was undertaken in the eight countries and submitted to a workshop, which recommended measures for improved application of the Convention by Parties and non-Parties.

EN 1 Promotion, in central and east European countries, of energy-saving household appliances in accordance with modern energy efficiency standards [evgeniy.nadezhdine@ unece.org]

Objective: Development of modern energy efficiency standards for household appliances in central and east European countries. Improvement of export possibilities of producers of such appliances to European markets.

Results: The first phase was extended to Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary and Ukraine and covered refrigerators and freezers and is completed. In the second phase, lighting equipment is added and the project is being extended to the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia. The addition of washing machines is planned, and small boilers are requested. Initial funding obtained from Italy, European Union and Energy Efficiency 2000 funds.

EN 2 Sustainable forest management and reduction of adverse environmental impacts through the use of wood and wood waste for heat production in Belarus [evgeniy.nadezhdin@unece.org]

Objective: Fuller use of indigenous energy resources, combined with energy conservation. Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from Belarus. Assistance to the development of a national programme for the use of wood waste, including all technological requirements needed for national production of required equipment. Increase of energy efficiency in installations of public buildings.

Results: Boilers burning wood wastes installed in a sanatorium for children exposed to results of the Chernobyl accident, in an industrial plant and in a residential area (Gomel). Obtaining GEF funding for the development of the full project of using wood waste in Belarus.

OA/IND 1 Implementation of the 1998 ECE Guidelines on Improving Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement for trade and investment in transition economies [geoffrey.hamilton@unece.org]

Objective: Improved enforcement of property rights in transition countries

Results: Completion of a pilot project in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, with training course for judges, customs and police officers. Beginning of a project in Russian Federation and Ukraine for completion in 2001. Beginning of a project in Bulgaria in 2001. Preparation of a project in Poland. Successful raising of funds from multinational companies.

STAT 1 Assistance in the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts in CIS countries [jean-etienne.chapron@unece.org]

Objective: Modernization of national accounting in CIS countries as the basis for their economic statistics

Results: Obtaining funding from OECD and Eurostat, and of support in kind from CIS Secretariat. Two to three meetings a year, exchanging experiences and providing technical counselling to individual statistical offices.

Part B: Projects extended to individual or groups of countries of the Balkan or in the CIS upon request

OA 1 Organization of an International Economic Conference on Tajikistan in the Regional Context of Central Asia [peter.tsyba@unece.org]

Objective: Contribution to the recovery of Tajikistan after the civil war (SPECA project)

Results: Creation of the ministerial working group on Tajikistan within SPECA. Preparation of documentation on the clarification of the development perspectives for Tajikistan in a regional context and in regional cooperation, for submission to the Conference. The Conference will be held in October 2001. Search for funding of the Conference

EN/ENV 1 Promotion of the rational and efficient use of energy and water resources in Central Asia [evgeniy.nadezhdin@unece.org ; branko.bosnjakovic@unece.org]

Objective: Rationalization of energy and water use through an agreement on the sharing of relevant resources.

Results: Creation of the corresponding SPECA working group. Establishment for the management of the project in cooperation between the five SPECA countries and the secretariats of ECE and ESCAP. Obtaining funds from the UN Development Account. Preparation of first expertises, and two seminars as a basis for diagnosis of the problems.

TRANS 3 Assistance in the organization of the Second International Euro-Asian Conference on Transport [zisis.haritos@unece.org]

Objective: Part of the preparations for the identification and establishment of four inland transport corridors between Europe and Asia.

Results: The Conference was held in September 2000. It adopted a declaration identifying four corridors for the development of transport networks at a later stage, as well as a number of recommendations aimed at facilitating Euro-Asian transport. Participation in raising funds for the event from the Netherlands and private organizations.

OA 2 Creation of a fund for microfinancing in Albania [gianluca.sambucini@unece.org]

Objective: Combat poverty and create employment through the installation of a credit institution assisting micro- and family enterprises, primarily in rural areas in Albania

Results: Identification of a local partner. Obtaining project funds from the CEI. First crediting of local micro- or family entrepreneurs, together with training (as of November 2000). Preparation of the extension of the crediting network to the country as a whole.

OA 3 Promotion of partnership in the reconstruction of a waste-water treatment plant in Armenia [andreas.kahnert@unece.org]

Objective: Improvement of municipal governance in a major city in Armenia, through the reconstruction of a waste-water treatment plant destroyed by an earthquake. Preservation of water quality of border-crossing rivers in the South Caucasus.

Results: German (Bavarian) support for the development of counselling to the local, regional and national governments concerned. Inclusion of the project as a priority in Armenian-German cooperation.

OA 4 Creation of a pilot biogas plant to use organic waste from a poultry farm in Belarus [andreas.kahnert@unece.org]

Objective: Strengthening of capacities to use local resources in order to reduce requirements for commercial energy. Contribution to the recycling efforts undertaken in the country.

Results: Development of a verified project description. Beginning of search for interested partners.

OA 5 Servicing the Regional Steering Committee of the SECI Trade and Transport Facilitation in South East Europe Project [w.keenan@mbox.unicc.org]

Objective: Reduction of delays during border-crossing (mainly on roads) in the SECI region through exchange of experiences, introduction of EU procedures, and coordination of practices at individual crossing points.

Results: The infrastructure for the implementation of the loans (US$ 86 million from the World Bank) and grants (US$ 9.0 million from the United States of America) were set up. Project managers were nominated in each participating country, a team at the World Bank, and a group of customs experts were created in addition to the Regional Steering Committee.

OA 6 Coordination of SECIPRO [w.keenan@mbox.unicc.org]

Objective: Creation of a regional association to oversee and coordinate the work done by the national PRO committees.

Results: Setting up of SECIPRO in September 1998, organization of nine meetings since. Coordination of national initiatives, and preparation of improved coordination of bilateral meetings between national PRO committees.

Part C: Projects extended to larger groups of countries

IND 1 Pilot project regarding demonstrations of environmental clean-up of selected sites polluted by chemicals [bernard.roux-fouillet@unece.org]

Objective: Contribution to the remediation of chemical pollution sites in transition countries as a prerequisite for their economic rehabilitation.

Results: Creation for the project of a task force which held nine meetings up to October 2000. Identification and description of 42 priority sites of chemical pollution for remediation. Actual cleanup in four sites, clean-up in process in five sites.

OA/IND 2 Creation and management of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Alliance [geoffrey.hamilton@unece.org]

Objective: Promotion of PPPs for infrastructure development both in South East Europe and other transition countries. Improvement of legal and regulatory frameworks for the purpose. Dissemination of information on best practices regarding PPPs.

Results: Project started in January 2001. Project formulation tabled at the first meeting of the Alliance (February 2001).

ECON 1 Development of a data collection and research programme regarding generations and gender issues in the ECE region as a whole [miroslav.macura@unece.org]

Objective: Analysis of selected aspects of the behaviour and quality of life of members of different generations (adolescents – working age – old age) during a period of a decade. Publication of the analyses in a series of technical publications and research results.

Results: Forming of a consortium of eight population research institutes. Meeting in July 2000 to discuss first programme proposals. Obtaining funds from UNFPA, and beginning of wider fund raising.

STAT 2 Contribution to social monitoring and reporting in transition countries, primarily in the CEI [jean-etienne.chapron@unece.org]

Objective: Establishment of monitoring systems for social development and support of the statistical database for human development reports. Support for gender statistics, including the creation of a regional gender statistics website. Development of statistical measures of human security (including pilot studies in the South Caucasus, in Southeast Europe and in Central Asia).

Results: Project at its beginning.

OA 7 Contribution to the organization of cooperation between wholesale markets for agricultural products in transition countries [gianluca.sambucini@unece.org]

Objective: Assistance in the reconstruction of marketing mechanisms and structures for agricultural products, complementary to the EBRD investments in the creation of wholesale markets.

Results: Creation of a CEI Wholesale Market Foundation for the management of the CEI funds devoted to cooperation between wholesale markets. Initial focus is on linked information systems and training and technical assistance to the management of wholesale markets.

OA 8 Development of the Declaration on SME's at the Dawn of the 21st Century in CEI and other transition countries [antal.szabo@unece.org]

Objective: Contribution to the development of SME policies and adequate instruments to increase the contribution of SMEs to the economic and social development of selected transition countries.

Results: Preparation of the Declaration for adoption at the CEI Third Summit Economic Forum (November 2000). Assessment of an adaptation of the Declaration to the conditions in CIS and BSEC countries.

OA 9 Development of best practices for use in transition countries in SME-related issues (particularly financing questions, business incubation, business advisory and information services, quality assurance, etc.) [antal.szabo@unece.org]

Objective: Strengthening of the SME sector in transition countries by contributing to the establishment of a modern framework for their creation and management.

Results: Organization of three high-level meetings on financing, business incubation and business advisory services. Creation of expert groups on business incubation and advisory services. Preparation of Guidelines for Business Incubation. Beginning of the implementation of the Guidelines in individual countries. Preparation of the extension of the project to the three South Caucasus countries.